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ABSTRACT

This essay examines distinctions between the roles of mothers and teachers, and draws implications for mothers, teachers, parent education programs, and research. Differences between the roles of mothers and teachers are discussed in terms of seven dimensions: (1) scope of functions (diffuse and limitless versus specific and limited); (2) intensity of affect (high versus low); (3) attachment (optimum attachment versus optimum detachment); (4) rationality (optimum irrationality versus optimum rationality); (5) spontaneity (optimum spontaneity versus optimum intentionality; (6) partiality (partial versus impartial); and (7) scope of responsibility (individual versus a whole group). It is argued that parent education programs should seek to support and not supplant the parents' own goals and patterns of responding to their children. The complementarity of the two roles should be acknowledged and ways in which the efforts of each might be supported by the other should be emphasized. Implications for teachers are that they should focus on those aspects of the child's functioning which they have control over and strive for an optimum combination of involvement and detachment. Research which would advance our understanding of the stresses and coping skills of teachers and day care workers should have a high priority. (Author/SS)

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MOTHERING AND TEACHING: SOME SIGNIFICANT DISTINCTIONS

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Mothering and Teaching: Some Significant Distinctions

Lilian G. Katz, Ph.D.

Among the outcomes of research on young children is the welcome acknowledgement that parents' behavior plays a central role in the intellectual development of their children. The influence of parents on their children's personalities has long been recognized, if not exaggerated. But recent research findings, exemplified by the well-known work of Burton White (1979), Levenstein (1970), Schaefer (1979) and others are now reflected in such catch phrases as 'parents are the child's first teacher' or even 'best teacher.' As a result, while traditionally teachers have been said to stand in loco parentis, recent slogans seem to be putting pressure on parents to stand in loco magisteris, i.e., in place of teachers.

The new optimism about the potential educational role of parents has given rise to numerous programs designed to help parents become more effective teachers of their young children. The objectives of many of these programs go beyond strengthening the so-called "parenting" skills to include training in tutorial and instructional skills as well.

Alongside current enthusiasm for parent training and parent involvement in schooling is increasing pressure on teachers in day care centers, preschools, and primary classes to respond to the apparent needs of children assumed to be unmet by their busy, working, and, in many cases, single mothers. In an article entitled "When the School is the Second Parent" (Mittenthal, 1979), Joseph Featherstone is reported to have said that the boundaries between parents and teachers are "nowhere as clear as they used to be." The article goes on to illustrate ways in which the stresses experienced by single and working

mothers impinge upon the work of their children's teachers, who seem to feel obliged to assume responsibility for some of the nurturing and comforting parental functions thought to be neglected at home.

In summary, pressures seem to increase on mothers* to instruct their children in ways that will render them more responsive to schooling, perhaps in part due to a lack of confidence in teachers and schools. On the other hand, it is not uncommon to hear teachers of young children complain that they must supply the nurturance and affection children seem to need before they can be instructed. While mothers often believe that their children might better attain academic success if teachers were more responsive, teachers often believe that their own efforts would be more successful if only mothers attended properly to their children's psychosocial needs. So long as such recriminatory attitudes persist, parent-teacher relationships cannot be focused, as they should be, on mutual support.

The purpose of this essay is to examine distinctions between the roles of mothers and teachers, and from these distinctions to draw some implications for mothers, for teachers, for programs and for research.

Dimensions of Distinction

It is obvious that teachers do many of the same things with young children that mothers do, and vice versa. It is in the nature of young children that from time to time they will require of their teachers at

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*The teacher-parent distinction discussed here may apply to fathers as well as to mothers. There appears to be no biological or other a priori reason why the behaviors attributed to mothers in this essay could not also be ascribed to fathers. Current research indicates that fathers do have a powerful impact upon their young children's development; however, though equally important, the father's influence is different from the mother's (see Zigler and Cascione, in press).

school some of the same tending, caring and guiding given them by their mothers at home. Similarly, mothers are helping their children to acquire knowledge and skills that teachers consider important. In their total interactions with children, it is likely that mothers and teachers engage in many of the same behaviors. However, in this discussion, my emphasis is on the distinctions rather than on the similarities in the two roles.

Although the behavior of the two role-takers is likely to overlap on each of the seven dimensions discussed below, their central tendencies can be expected to yield the distinctions indicated in Figure 1. In the service of exploration the role distinctions are somewhat overstated. No role-takers occur in the pure types described in this essay. Furthermore, it should be understood that although the dimensions on which the two role-takers are distinguished interact with each other, they are enumerated separately in order to highlight potential problems arising from confusion between the two roles.

(insert Figure 1. about here)

Scope of Functions

In a discussion of some of the discontinuities between families and schools, Getzels (1974) points out that the two institutions are discontinuous in at least two ways, namely the scope and the affectivity characterizing the relationships in the two settings.

Under the rubric of scope, Getzels points out that the functions to be fulfilled by the family are diffuse and limitless, in contradistinction to those of the school, which are specific and limited. The all-encompassing scope of the responsibilities, duties and potential content of the relationships within families is "taken for granted." There is,

according to Getzels, nothing about the young child that is not the parents' business. Thus it is unnecessary to prove that any aspect of the child's life is within the purview of the family.

However, in the case of the school, relationships between teachers and children are specific in scope, function, and content in that the legitimate area of interaction "is limited to a particular technically-defined sphere, and what is not conceded to the school because of its special competence remains the private affair of the participants" (Getzels, 1974, p. 48).

Similarly, the Newsons (Newson and Newson, 1976) point out that the responsibility society "enjoins on parents to their young children is quite different from that which it expects from teachers, nurses and other professionals...for one thing it has no fixed hours...parents of preschool children never go off duty..." (p. 400).

The distinctions in scope of functions proposed by Getzels and the Newsons appear to become greater and sharper with increasing age of the pupil. To teachers of preschool and primary children, the distinctions are problematic precisely because of the age of the child: the younger the child, the wider the range of functioning for which adults must assume responsibility. Thus age and the level of maturity associated with it, in and of themselves, give rise to confusion between the two roles. To expect day care, preschool and primary school teachers to accept as wide a scope of functions as mothers do serves to exacerbate the long-standing problems of unclear role boundaries.

Getzels' formulation of the discontinuities between families and schools also raises the question, "What is the nature of the 'technically-defined sphere,' 'special competence' or non-maternal functions of the

teacher in day care, preschool and kindergarten classes?" In the case of the elementary school teacher, the technical and specific competence resides in managing of instruction in specific academic skills and content and in fostering the life of the instructional-unit group. Indeed, departmentalization of schooling increases with the grade level, reflecting increasing specialization of teachers and their responsibilities. In day care and preschool education, specific competences related to instruction are typically eschewed. Furthermore, the success of the parent cooperative nursery schools and preschool playgroups (in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand), operated by untrained and volunteer mothers, casts some doubt upon the necessity for specific technical competencies for teachers of young children (see Haystead et al. 1980, Ch. 5). In addition, the frequent assertion that 'children learn through play' adds to the difficulties of defining just what special skills early childhood educators do and should have. As long as only the "insiders" understand and/or recognize the special functions and competencies required of teachers of young children, and as long as the unique attributes of mothers in relation to their children are underappreciated by teachers, effective collaboration between the two groups of role-takers will be difficult to achieve and maintain.

Intensity of Affect

It seems reasonable to assume that both the intensity of affect (of all kinds) and the frequency with which behavior is marked by intense affect would also distinguish the two sets of role-takers. That is to say that on the average, when the central tendencies of mothers are compared to those of teachers, we should find more frequent and greater affective intensity in the behavior of mothers than of teachers.

ROLE DIMENSION	MOTHERING	TEACHING
1. Scope of Functions	Diffuse & Limitless	Specific & Limited
2. Intensity of Affect	High	Low
3. Attachment	Optimum Attachment	Optimum Detachment
4. Rationality	Optimum Irrationality	Optimum Rationality
5. Spontaneity	Optimum Spontaneity	Optimum Intentionality
6. Partiality	Partial	Impartial
7. Scope of Responsibility	Individual	Whole Group

Figure 1: Distinctions Between Mothering and Teaching in their Central Tendencies on Seven Dimensions

As Rubenstein and Howes have pointed out, the role of day care teachers is "both more specified and limited than the role of mother at home ...the mother's emotional investment may enhance the likelihood of high-intensity affective responses" (Rubenstein and Howes, 1979, p. 3). The Newsons address this dimension by calling it "involvement" and point out that "parents' deep involvement with their own children is precisely the quality which makes parents different from other more 'professional' caretakers" (Newson and Newson, 1976, p. 371). They point out also that the parent-child relationship often becomes "violent and stormy because it is so deep." On the other hand, the teacher-child relationship is "less intimate, more formal and much less permanent":

> ...A good parent-child relationship is in fact very unlike a good teacher-child relationship; yet because the roles have certain ingredients in common, though in different proportions (nurturance, discipline, information-giving, for example), they are sometimes confused by the participants themselves, to the misunderstanding of all concerned...(p. 401-402, italics theirs)

Pressure on parents to take on more instructional-type functions can lead to a variety of difficulties, one of which is exemplified in the case of a mother of a child with so-called learning disabilities. The mother reported that she and her child were enrolled in a special "home intervention" program designed to teach mothers to give their "learning disabled" children regular rigorous instruction and skill training at home. Although unintended by the program leaders, the mother reported that she became so anxious about being able to get her son to

meet the specified learning objectives set for them both that their relationship deteriorated. With each lesson in which he fell behind, she became disappointed and tense, and the child became nervous and recalcitrant, which increased her own disappointment and tension, and so forth until, as she reported, she realized "the boy had no mother." She stopped the lessons and asked the professionals to continue to teach him while she supported his struggle to learn by being the soft, understanding and relatively non-demanding adult in his life. In some ways her story reminds us of common problems encountered when trying to teach a close friend or relative to drive a car. We become aware of how much easier it is to be patient and understanding of a stranger than of someone close to us. Very often the stress encountered in trying to teach someone close to us places heavy burdens on the relationship.

In sum, one would expect the average level of affective intensity of the two role-takers to be distinguished from each other as indicated in Figure 1. The affectivity dimension is closely related to the attachment dimension discussed below.

Attachment

Although the term attachment is widely used in professional as well as popular literature on child development and child rearing, it is a difficult one to define. In the literature on infant development, attachment refers to an underlying variable inferred from infants' reactions to strangers and to separations and reunions with primary caretakers (Cohen, 1974). Rutter (1979) indicates that attachment is a construct involving several features, and should be distinguished from bonding to adults. The available definitions focus almost exclusively on the attachment of the child to the adults. What is required for this discussion is

a way of defining the attachment of the adults to their children. Ramey and Farran offer a broad definition of adult-child attachment using the term functional maternal attachment to mean "simply those caregiving functions that must be performed for infants to sustain a normal development" (Ramey and Farran, 1978, p. 2,). The set of functions includes "at a minimum a refrain from physical and verbal abuse, the provision of information and affection, and direct personal involvement with the infant."

Research on the reciprocity and rhythmicity which characterize normal mother-infant relationships brings us closer to a way of defining attachment so that the adults' attachment to the child is included. For the purposes of this essay the term attachment is defined as the capacity to be aroused to a wide range of behaviors and intense feelings by the status and behavior of the other. If the attachment is a mutual one, then one would expect the behavior and feelings of either member of the pair to activate strong feelings and/or reactions in the other. This definition is intended to include such feelings as anxiety, alarm, fear, anger, and rage, as well as the proverbial pride and joy and other tender loving and caring emotions, and the behaviors that express them. Common usage of the term attachment tends to refer primarily to the nurturant side of the spectrum of feelings and behaviors of adults, and to overlook the point that intense rage or terror in the face of impending danger to the child are also manifestations of what we call attachment. The definition proposed here implies that the opposite of attachment is not rejection or anger, but indifference.

In Figure 1 the entry "optimum attachment' is intended to reflect the notion that while development could be jeopardized by mother-child

attachment that is too weak (minimal), it could also be undermined by excessive attachment, commonly called "smother love"*

The optimum attachment recommended here as an ideal feature of mother-child relationships is distinguished the optimum detachment from which should and mark teacher-child relationships. The latter is often referred to as "detached concern" (Maslach and Pines, 1977). The term detachment is used not only in order to characterize the distinctions in the functions of the two role-takers, but to suggest also that it is appropriate for professionals to make self-conscious or deliberate efforts to distance themselves (optimally) from their clients. As Maslach and Pines (1977) have suggested, people who work intensively and intimately with people for extended periods of time inevitably suffer stresses associated with strong emotional arousal. As they point out, one of the ways of coping with such potential stress is to adopt techniques of detachment, which vary in their effectiveness as well as in their relationship to the conduct of work: "By treating one's clients or patients in a more objective detached way, it becomes easier to perform the necessary interviews, tests, or operations without suffering from strong psychological discomfort" (Maslach and Pines, 1977, p. 100). The authors go on to suggest that "detached concern" is a term which conveys "the difficult (and almost paradoxical) position of having to distance oneself from people in order to cure them" (Maslach and Pines, 1977, p. 100).

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*What constitutes an optimum degree of attachment for any given mother-child pair would be difficult to predict or pre-specify since we only know whether the attachment is optimum if the child is observed to be thriving; however, failure to thrive may not always be attributable to disturbances in attachment. This "endless regress" definitional problem appears to be inescapable. (See Bronowski, 1977.)

Teachers who are unable to detach themselves optimally from their pupils and become too close to them are likely to suffer emotional "burn-out" which is typically accompanied by loss of capacity to feel anything at all for the clients. Certainly those who are extremely detached at the other extreme, for whatever reason, are unlikely to be effective in their work with children because such extreme detachment is also accompanied by low responsiveness to client needs and demands.

One of the advantages mothers have over teachers in dealing with the stresses of attachment, as well as intense affect, is the tacit knowledge that their child's psychological and physical dependency upon them will slowly but surely be outgrown. Teachers of day care, preschool and kindergarten children on the other hand, must continually cope with dependent children, year in and year out. They must protect themselves from potential "burn-out" by developing an optimal level of detached concern--optimal in terms of their own emotional stability and effective functioning.

It should be noted also that teachers who are suspected of cultivating close attachments to their pupils in order to "meet their own personal needs," as the saying goes, are subject to substantial criticism or derision from co-workers and other professionals. Occasionally such teachers come to perceive themselves as protecting children from their own parents, and occasionally the child's responsiveness to such teacher closeness gives rise to parental jealousy. As Anna Freud pointed out long ago, a teacher "is neither mother nor therapist." A teacher with "objective attitudes can respond warmly enough to satisfy children without getting herself involved to a dangerous extent..." (Freud, 1952, p. 232). She adds that a teacher must not think of herself as a

"mother-substitute." If as teachers, "we play the part of a mother, we get from the child the reactions which are appropriate for the mother-child relationship" (p. 231). All of this could result in "rivalry with mothers" and other undesirable consequences, making teacher-mother mutual support and complementarity difficult to develop.

Optimum detachment is also desirable for teachers because it can free them to make realistic evaluations of their pupils' development and learning, which is a major component of their work. Mothers, on the other hand, may not have to make realistic or so-called "objective" evaluations of their children's growth very often, although their lack of realism is a frequent source of frustration to teachers! In the long run, a mother's optimism about her child's progress, even if it seems excessive, is probably in the child's best interest. Such optimism in and of itself may contribute to the child's growth and development. Maternal pessimism, on the other hand, may be more damaging than any teacher's realism. Many children seem to think that mother, being omniscient and knowing the child more fully and completely than the teacher, is in possession of the "real" truth, and that when there is a discrepancy between the mother's and the teacher's evaluation, the former is more accurate. Experience suggests that individuals caught between their mother's pessimism concerning their potential for achievement, and a teacher's optimism, devote considerable energy to the problem of how to keep "the real truth" from the teacher--having no choice but to accept mother's view as the "true" one. Such discrepancies may account for some cases of lifelong doubts about one's true abilities.

Differences in the assessments of the two role-takers may be related to the differences in the base-lines to which the child in question is being compared. They may also be due to dramatic differences in the child's behavior in the home and at school. It is not uncommon to hear both mothers and teachers comment on how strikingly different the child seems in the "other" setting. Frequently, a mother will report that the teacher's description of her child was difficult to reconcile with her own experiences with the child. Studies of this phenomenon and the ways children cope with discrepant evaluations have not been found.

Another consideration leading to the recommendation of optimum detachment for teachers is the importance of minimizing the likelihood of incidents we might call "invasions of privacy" or other forms of encroachment upon aspects of children's socialization which are the legitimate domain of the family. Similarly, optimum detachment is recommended in order to help teachers with the ever-present temptation to engage in favoritism. Since it is unlikely that one can be strongly attached to more than one or two pupils, the risk of favoritism increases with increasing closeness to any one pupil. The detachment approach should help to reduce those dangers.

Many early childhood workers reject the value of optimum detachment because of their deep concern for children's need to feel closeness and attachment to adults. It is not clear how the proposed detachment would affect such "needy" children. But it is useful to keep in mind that while the relationships between adults and children in day care, preschool, and primary classes are reciprocal, they are not necessarily symmetrical. In particular, it may be possible for young children to

feel very attached to their teachers, even to worship and adore them, without the teachers' responding at the same level of intensity. Such "unrequited love" during the early years may help the child to gratify needs for cathexis without placing severe emotional burders on teachers. Research on such asymmetrical attachment might help to clarify the potential effects on such children of the detachment of their teachers.

Rationality

It is hypothesized here that effective mothering is associated at least in part, with optimum irrationality, and that the two extremes may both be damaging to the growing child. On the one hand, extreme rationality in a mother might be perceived by the child as cool, calculating unresponsiveness that could lead to a variety of emotional disturbances. Extreme irrationality, on the other hand, may present the growing child with a range of problems stemming from insufficient predictability of the interpersonal environment.

By using the term 'optimum irrationality' I do not intend to propose chaotic, scatterbrained mindlessness! Rather, the emphasis is upon the depth and strength of what we sometimes call "ego-involvement' --similar in nature to attachment as defined above.

The irrationality suggested here is, in a sense, a matter of the mind, or the rational aspects of functioning, employed 'in the service of the heart', so to speak. On the other hand much literature is prepared for and presented to teachers to remind them to bring their hearts to bear upon their professional minds.

The element of 'ego-involvement' is also illustrated by the notion that if a mother perceives herself as a failure at mothering she is likely

to experience painful guilt, strong feelings of inadequacy and deep regret, perhaps for a lifetime. If on the other hand a teacher perceives herself to have failed at teaching she/he can leave the occupation in a fairly orderly fashion (e.g., at the end of an academic year), and residual emotions like guilt, feelings of failure, regret and defeat are likely to subside and disappear with a few months.

Newson and Newson point out that parents can show their flexibility because their relationships with the children are both permanent and intimate, and that although it is often suggested that parents "ought to strive after consistency at all times: fortunately most are human enough to fail in this unusual aim" (1976, p. 402).

A different aspect of this dimension is captured in the expression, "No one in her right mind would be a mother!" As Bronfenbrenner has put it, "in order to develop, a child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults," by which he means, "Somebody has to be crazy about that kid!" (Bronfenbrenner, 1978, pp. 773-774). However, for modern, well educated mothers this may appear to be something of an over-statement.

A rational analysis of the pros and cons of motherhood would be unlikedly to lead to a decision to undertake it. Indeed, it is difficult to find 'reasons' for having children today. Offspring are not "useful" as a hedge against economic dependency in old age. Rather than being considered potential members of the family labor force and contributors to the family income, they are expected to become substantial drains on the family finances. Thus, even more than their forebears, modern parents have children just because they "have to," -- irrationally, so to speak. Truly rational analyses of parenthood, at this time, would probably provide more counterindicators than not!

Teachers on the other hand should be optimally rational, in that they should bring to bear upon their work careful reasoning concerning what is to be done or not done. Teaching calls for rational analysis of how to proceed in the education of young children on the basis of accumulated knowledge of how children develop and learn, and of what is appropriate pedagogy for children of a given age range and experiential background. Presumably the value of teacher training is precisely that it equips the future teacher with information and knowledge from the relevant "supply" disciplines and from pedagogy, all of which become available for proceeding rationally in the work of teaching. It seems reasonable to assume that teachers' possession of relevant knowledge would serve to increase their confidence in their own behavior and in their general role competence. However, increased knowledge for mothers may have the opposite effect, and may serve to undermine what is often rather fragile confidence when facing "experts" who may appear comparatively cool and confident in their own advice and procedures.

Spontaneity

Along very similar lines, parents should strive to be optimally spontaneous in dealing with their children. Many programs of parent education run the risk of encouraging parents to become excessively cerebral and self-conscious in responding to their children. Extreme pressure to modify their behavior may lead parents to a condition called "analysis paralysis," or inability to act with confidence, which could be damaging to the mother-child relationship. The resolve to respond to one's child according to certain steps and procedures arrived at cerebrally, intellectually, as it were, may work well on the first or even

second occasion. But very often, even the strongest resolutions break down under the weight of what is (and should be) an emotionally-loaded relationship. Such "break-downs" are related to the fact that the child's behavior/status <u>really matters</u> to the parent, which comes with "attachment" as defined above. The cool, calculating, ever reasoning or reasonable parent might be perceived by the child as indifferent.

Another aspect of spontaneity is that it is precisely what gives a mother's day-to-day behavior at home the variation and contrast which the growing child can use as a basis for hypothesis formulation and testing in the quest to make sense of experience. Indeed, it may well be that what gives <u>play</u> its reputed high value in children's learning derives from the spontaneous, casual and often random variations produced in many types of play (Newson and Newson, 1979). These variations provide information which the child operates on and transforms into meaningful contents of the mind. The opportunity to observe such spontaneous variations, and to obtain parental help in making logical inferences from them, may be the very thing the slogans such as "mother is the best teacher" refer to. As the Newsons state:

> ... it must surely be within the circle of the family that the child must learn to adjust to and cope with living among other people in all their inconsistency and moodiness... Moodiness, understanding and failure are all part of the ordinary human condition, and parents' role is to present and interpret these things to the child within a permanent loving relationship which offers plenty of time for mistakes to be made and to be forgiven on both sides (Newson and Newson, 1976, p. 402)

By contrast, instruction can be defined as non-random prespecified sets of stimuli or information intended to cause specific constructs and skills to be acquired. This contrast between play and instruction may also help to account for some of the dissension in the ranks concerning appropriate programming for infant day care. On the one hand there is pressure to rise above the custodial functions of day care and to provide 'developmental' programs. On the other hand, formal lessons, instruction or "structured" activities are thought to be inappropriate for the young. If the staff must await spontaneous "teachable moments," they may feel as though they are not earning their keep, not really "working", and role ambiguity may intensify.

While mothers should be optimally spontaneous with their children, teachers should strive to be optimally intentional about their work. Their activities should be largely predetermined, premeditated in terms of some aims, goals, and broad objectives which are more or less explicit and are responsive to parents (the primary clients) as well as to pupils. With training and experience teachers' intentional behavior takes on a spontaneous quality as well.

Perhaps it is this very degree of intentionality which most clearly distinguishes mothering from teaching, and child-rearing from education. That is not to say that parents have no intentions! It is likely, however, that parental intentions are less explicit to parents themselves as well as to others, and all less formal, more global and more personalized in that they are held for their own individual offspring. Research on the degree and specificity of intentions among the two sets of role-takers might help to sharpen understanding of these role distinctions.

Early childhood educators often speak appreciatively of the great amounts children learn from the hidden curriculum, from incidental learning or from unintended or unplanned events. However, by definition, such unintended learning cannot be intended...one cannot intend something to happen unintentionally! Presumably the purpose of training in pedagogy is to bring the consequences of one's pedagogical methods into closer and closer agreement with the intentions underlying one's pedagogy. Similarly, the virtue of instruction would seem to lie in the deliberate minimization of spontaneous or random variations in activities and responses, maximizing the likelihood that specific stimuli will be presented to the learner and intended or predicted learning outcomes will most likely be assured.

Spontaneity of the mother is important also in that it may contribute to the widest possible variations in behavior, which in turn give rise to the widest possible range of information coming potentially available to the child. The availability of a wide range of information increases the probability that children will be able to locate information that matches adequately or optimally what they are ready to operate upon and/or to assimilate. Furthermore, if the child's location of appropriate information is followed by mother's focussing on the selected events or information, then the child's environment becomes a highly informative and responsive one. In studies of mother-infant interaction it has been suggested that adults exaggerate their facial and vocal expressions in order to provide "behavioral contrasts" in response to infants' "limited information processing capacities" (Tronick, et al., 1980, p. 20). Thus the spontaneous variations in behavior ideally serve to increase the likelihood that matches between the child's readiness to process information and the adult's provision of it will be maximized.

As suggested above, instruction and pedagogy are concerned with narrowing the variations presented to the child so that specific information and child operations upon it can be maximized. However, if the narrow range of information presented by the pedagogue misses the mark for a particular child the child's alternatives are fewer than they might be at home and the result may be a sense of failure or inadequacy, which in turn, may have deleterious effects upon the child's education.

Questions concerning what sets of variations, stimuli or information should be made available to young children in preschool classes have occupied curriculum developers for many years and definitive answers have not yet been formulated.

Partiality

Along lines very similar to those discussed above, mother-child relationships are not only charged with highly intense emotions, but "children in the family are treated as special persons...," and in school they are "necessarily treated as members of categories" (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 22). It is thus in the nature of things that parents are partial towards their own children, biased in their favor, champions of their children's needs and exaggerators of their virtues, gifts and assets. This so-called particularism stands in sharp contrast to the universalism expected of teachers. Thus it is appropriate for parents to ask teachers to make special allowances and provisions for their own children, and that is precisely what a teacher often cannot do, since the teacher must treat the children impartially. Teacher impartiality means that whatever skills, knowledge, insights, techniques, etc. the teacher has at his or her disposal, they are made equally available to every child as needed, whether the child is liked or not. Indeed, it is

the very capacity to make all of one's pedagogical know-how available to the child one does not especially like which marks the teacher as a genuine professional.

Scope of Responsibility

The great emphasis placed by early childhood educators on the importance of meeting the "individual needs" of their pupils may have obscured yet another distinction between the roles of mothering and teaching, namely, that mothers are typically concerned about the welfare of one rather than all of the teacher's pupils. Consequently a mother may make demands on the teacher which might place the welfare of the whole group of pupils at risk. Parents have a right to protect their own child's cultural/ ethnic uniqueness, and to ask of the teacher that special consideration as appropriate, be made for their child. But mothers are often unaware of the pressures from other mothers, as well as of institutional sources, that the teacher is attempting to respond to. The teacher is responsible not only for every individual in the group. She is also responsible for the life of the group as a unit that is more than the sum of the lives of the individual members. The teacher has to balance the importance of responding to unique individual "needs" against the responsibility to establish and maintain the ethos of the group through which the norms of behavior, expected levels of achievement, and even many feelings are learned.

Summary

The seven dimensions outlined above probably reflect some kind of common underlying variable which is difficult to name. As Lightfoot put it:

> The universalistic relationship encouraged by teachers is supportive of a more rational, predictable, and stable social system with visible and explicit criteria for achievement and failure. It does not suffer the chaotic fluctuation of emotions, indulgence, and impulsiveness that are found in the intimate association of parents and children.... Even the teachers who speak of "loving" their children do not really mean the boundless, all-encompassing love of mothers and fathers but rather a very measured and time-limited love that allows for withdrawal (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 23)

The Newsons, in a study of 700 elementary school children and their relationships to their families and schools, also underscore this point:

> Parents have an involvement with their own children which nobody else can simulate... The crucial characteristic of the parental role is its partiality for the individual child.... The best that community care can offer is impartiality--to be fair to every child in its care. But a developing personality needs more than that: it needs to know that to someone it matters more than other children; that someone will go to unreasonable lengths, not just reasonable ones, for its sake (Newson and Newson, 1976, p. 406, italics theirs).

Our understanding of the potential problems arising from confusing the two roles might be helped by studies of those women who are simultaneous occupants of both roles. Casual observation and experience suggest that teachers who are also mothers of young children may have elevated expectations of their own children as well as of themselves. It has been reported that such mothers are sometimes ashamed and embarrassed by their emotionality with their own children, expecting themselves to be as level-headed at home as they are in the classroom. Similarly, some expect their own children to exemplify perfection to enhance their credibility as teachers.

To the extent that such role fusion does occur and produces these kinds of expectations, clarification of the distinction between the two roles suggested in this paper may help to alleviate some of the strains for those who occupy both at the same time. In addition, some re-

search on the ways such dual role-takers define the two roles and what sources of role fusion, confusion and strain they identify would be helpful.

Implications for Parent Education

One of the major functions of parent education programs should be to help parents think through their own goals for their own children, to develop and clarify what kind of life-style they want to construct with the family, and to identify what they themselves perceive to be the major issues deserving attention. The program should offer parents insights and various kinds of information while encouraging them to accept only what makes sense and what is consistent with their own preferences.

Parent education programs should also encourage and support parents' confidence in their own impulses and in their own competence. It is hypothesized that, in the long run, efforts to support impulses already in place and available to the mother will result in greater change and improvement in parental functioning than efforts to change or replace those impulses directly. This hypothesis rests on the assumption that parental confidence, in and of itself, leads to greater effectiveness (particularly in matters relating to the assertion of authority in parent-child interaction) and that greater effectiveness, in and of itself, leads to greater confidence. This "looping" or "circularity" in which effects become the causes of effects would seem to be especially powerful in relationships marked by high intensity of affect, i.e., in which effects really matter to the actors. The hypothesis is also related to the assumption that greater parental confidence is more likely to promote greater advice seeking and greater openness to new information than is parental embarrassment, shame or low self-confidence.

As indicated earlier in this discussion, parent education that is excessively technique-based or technique-oriented may yield positive effects in the short run and greater feelings of failure and/or guilt in the long run. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that parenting is not primarily technical but is more dispositional and ideally largely unselfconscious. A related point here is that children respond not so much to the specific behavior of the parents as to the meanings they assign to that behavior. But the meanings they attribute to any given episode are a function of the larger pattern of which they perceive that episode to be a part. Children may have difficulty giving the meanings their mothers intended to technique-bound episodes. Thus, for example, parental reliance on specific techniques, phrases or other maneuvers may confound the problems issuing from faulty patterns of behavior or from characteristic parental dispositions. The latter take time to change and to reshape, and may perhaps be more effectively modified in parents who have more, rather than less, confidence.

Parent educators often report that the spontaneous impluses of some of the parents they work with put the children in jeopardy, usually in relation to their psychosocial rather than their academic development. To what extent such judgments are matters of taste, preference and/or value differences between parent educators and their clients is not yet clear. In fact, it may be in the nature of things that parent educators have to work in the absence of sufficient certainty concerning the potential benefit or damage of a given maternal pattern. One way to cope with such uncertainty is to scrutinize as carefully as possible each case of potential jeopardy with regard to the certainty of

risk or danger to the child. When--in the educator's best judgment at a given time--the potential for danger seems reasonably clear, then referral to specialized agencies should be made. However, when examination of the available information raises doubts about the potential danger to the child, then the next appropriate step seems to be to encourage and support the mother's own pattern of responding to the child. Differences in taste, philosophical positions and/or values probably underlie many of the judgements that educators make concerning the mother's need to change her behavior. However, it is useful to remember that parent educators as well as teachers of young children are bound to take firm stands on their beliefs and philosophical positions, since the latter serve to give teachers the kind of certainty required for action in complex situations in which reliable data cannot serve as a basis for decision making (see Katz, 1977, Chapter 6).

Powell (in press) suggests that when parents are given new information, or are pressed into changing their patterns of behavior in ways that are discrepant with their own values, they minimize the discrepant stimuli and reduce their influence. Powell's analyses of the various parental strategies for coping with the pressures placed upon them to change serve to remind us that education in parenting is not an easy matter. It may be that trying to get mothers to instruct their children in pre-academic tasks is easier than helping them with deeper and more complex aspects of development (e.g., self-reliance, moral development, social skills, motivation, etc.).

Implications for Teachers of Young Children

The analyses presented above seem to suggest a number of points which may help teachers in their encounters with mothers as well as in coping with the day-to-day problems of working with young children.

It seems obvious, even without detailed analyses of the two roles, that the special contributions of each role taker to the ultimate socialization of the young child should be understood, accepted and respected by each of them. Parent educators as well as those who write in the popular press for parents might help by acknowledging the complementarity of these functions, rather than engaging in trying to fix blame on one or the other for whatever social disaster is capturing popular attention at a given moment. Expressions like "Parents are the child's best teacher" seem to suggest that teachers are, if not the worst, then certainly a distant second best. The comparison itself is inappropriate. What should be emphasized are the functions and characteristics of each role and how the efforts of each role taker might be supported by the other.

Another implication of the analyses attempted in this essay is that teachers should take time periodically to consider whether they have achieved an optimal level of involvement or detachment in their relationships with children. The risk of teacher "burn-out" is a real one, especially when the work is with children whose families are under stress. Teachers who work together as members of a teaching team might also help each other by developing a system for giving each other relief on those moments when the emotional load feels too heavy to cope with.

Teachers may also be helped by focusing on those aspects of the child's functioning they actually do control. A teacher cannot change the family into which a child is born or with whom he is living. Nor can the teacher generally change very much of the mother's behavior. But a teacher can take responsibility for the time a child is actually

directly in his or her care, and focus on making that time as supportive, enriching and educative as possible. The latter is a sufficiently big task by itself, without adding to it the need to make up for the child's alleged missing mothering!

Teachers may also find it helpful in their relations with mothers to acknowledge and accept the mother's advocacy for and partiality toward her own child as natural components of motherhood. Similarly, as mothers approach teachers to request special dispensations for their own children, teachers' acknowledgement of the "naturalness" of such demands may help them to respond more patiently and less defensively than they seem typically to do. Teachers might be mindful on such occasions that while they may practice impartiality within their own classroom, they champion their own classes when representing them as a group in comparison with other teachers' classes! On such occasions teachers also ask for special dispensations and also describe their own classes as having special or unique needs, gifts and strengths...much the way mothers do for their individual children. Recognition of this phenomenon may help teachers respond to parents with greater respect and understanding.

Conclusion

Much of the discussion presented above is speculative, based on informal observations and reports of the experiences of teachers, parents and parent educators. Research that would verify the accuracy of these speculations would be helpful. Of all of the potential research efforts on matters referred to in this essay, those should have high priority which would advance our understanding of the stresses and coping skills of teachers and day care workers. Present social and

economic developments suggest that more and more children and their parents will come to depend upon professional child care workers and preschool teachers, and more parents will stand to benefit from well-designed parent education programs. Much is yet to be learned about how such professional activities should be conducted, and what kinds of working conditions are desirable. Certainly mutual support of the persons involved should help each to cope more effectively with the stresses encountered when living and working with young children every day.

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